CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1   1.   A method for controlling program installation on a computing device,

2   the method comprising:

3   determining the configuration of an existing program that executes on the

4   computing device;

5   determining the configuration of a new program that is to be installed on the

6   computing device to replace the existing program;

7   determining whether installation of the new program is authorized; and

8   preventing installation of the new program if installation is not authorized.

1   2.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining the configuration of an

2   existing program comprises determining at least one of a program type and version,

3   and determining the configuration of a new program comprises determining at least

4   one of a program type and version.

1   3.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining the configuration of an

2   existing program comprises determining the configuration of a program that is

3   embedded in solid-state memory of the computing device.

1   4.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining the configuration of an

2   existing program comprises determining the configuration of an operating system that

3   is embedded in re-writable, solid-state memory of a terminal computer.

1   5.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining the configuration of an

2 existing program comprises reading configuration information stored in a

3 management interface of the computing device.

1   6.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining the configuration of an

2 existing program comprises reading a program type and version from an original

3 equipment manufacturer (OEM) string of a desktop management interface (DMI) of

4 the computing device.

1   7.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining the configuration of a

2 new program comprises reading configuration information from a header associated

3 with the new program.

1   8.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether installation of the

2 new program is authorized comprises comparing the existing program and the new

3 program to determine whether they are of the same type.

1   9.   The method of claim 1, wherein determining whether installation of the

2 new program is authorized further comprises comparing version information for the

3 existing program and the new program.

1   10.   A system for controlling program installation, the system comprising:

2   means for comparing a configuration of an existing operating system that

3   executes on a computing device with a configuration of a new operating system that a

4   user wishes to install on the computing device;

5   means for determining whether installation of the new operating system is

6   authorized; and

7   means for installing the new operating system if installation is authorized.

1   11.   The system of claim 10, wherein the means for comparing comprise

2   means for comparing at least one of a type and version of the operating systems.

1   12.   The system of claim 10, wherein the means for comparing comprise

2   means for reading configuration information stored in a management interface of the

3   computing device that relates to the configuration of the existing operating system.

1   13.   The system of claim 10, wherein the means for comparing comprise

2   means for reading configuration information from a header associated with the new

3   operating system.

1   14.   The system of claim 10, wherein the means for determining comprise

2   means for determining whether the operating systems are of the same type.

1   15.   A system stored on a computer-readable medium, the system

2   comprising:

3   logic configured to determine the type and version of an existing operating

4   system embedded in memory of a computing device;

5   logic configured to determine the type and version of a new operating system

6   that has been downloaded to the computing device; and

7   logic configured to determine whether installation of the new program is

8   authorized.

1   16.   The system of claim 15, wherein the logic configured to determine the

2   type and version of an existing operating system comprises logic configured to read

3   configuration information stored in a management interface of the computing device.

1   17.   The system of claim 15, wherein the logic configured to determine the

2   type and version of a new operating system comprises logic configured to read

3   configuration information from a header associated with the new operating system.

1   18.   The system of claim 15, wherein the logic configured to determine

2   whether installation of the new operating system is authorized comprises logic

3   configured to compare the type of the existing operating system with the type of the

4   new operating system.

1   19.   The system of claim 15, further comprising logic configured to install

2   the new operating system and replace the existing operating system when installation

3   is authorized.

1   20.   A computing device, comprising:

2   a processor; and

3   memory comprising an operating system and a management interface that

4   comprises configuration information that describes the type and version of the

5   operating system, the configuration information being accessible to a installer

6   program that is configured to install new versions of the operating system.

1   21.   The device of claim 20, wherein the memory comprises re-writable,

2   solid-state memory and wherein the operating system is embedded within the solid-

3   state memory.

1   22.   The device of claim 20, wherein the management interface comprises a

2   desktop management interface (DMI) and the configuration information is stored in a

3   original equipment manufacturer (OEM) string contained within the DMI.

1   23.   The device of claim 20, further comprising an installer program that is

2   configured to install new versions of the operating system.

1   24.   The device of claim 20, wherein the computing device is a terminal

2   computer that does not comprise a hard drive.